



[3411-15-P]

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

36 CFR Part 294

RIN 0596-AD26

Extension of Comment Period on the Proposed Rule on Roadless Area

Conservation; National Forests System Lands in Colorado

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rule; extension of comment period.

SUMMARY: The Forest Service published a notice in the **Federal Register** on November 20, 2015, initiating a 45-day comment period on the proposed rule on Roadless Area Conservation; National Forests System Lands in Colorado. The closing date for the 45-day comment period was January 4, 2016. The Agency is extending the comment period to January 15, 2016.

DATES: The closing date for the proposed rule published on November 20, 2015 (80 FR 72665) has been extended. Comments must be received by **January 15, 2016**.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be submitted electronically via the internet to go.usa.gov/3JQwJ or to www.regulations.gov. Send written comments to: Colorado Roadless Rule, 740 Simms Street, Golden, CO 80401.

All comments, including names and addresses when provided, will be placed in the project record and available for public inspections and copying. The public may inspect comments received on this proposed rule at USDA, Forest Service, Ecosystem Management Coordination Staff, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC,

between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on business days. Those wishing to inspect comments should call (202) 205-0895 ahead to facilitate an appointment and entrance to the building. Comments may also be inspected at USDA, Forest Service Rocky Mountain Regional Office, Strategic Planning Staff, 740 Simms, Golden, Colorado, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on business days. Those wishing to inspect comments at the Regional Office should call (303) 275-5156 ahead to facilitate an appointment and entrance to the building.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ken Tu, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Rocky Mountain Regional Office at (303) 275-5156.

Individuals using telecommunication devices for the deaf may call the Federal Information Relay Services at 1-800-877-8339 between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The State of Colorado maintains that coal mining in the North Fork Coal Mining Area provides an important economic contribution and stability for the communities of the North Fork Valley. USDA and the Forest Service are committed to contributing to energy security, and carrying out the government's overall policy to foster and encourage orderly and economic development of domestic mineral resources.

All existing Federal coal leases within CRAs occur in the North Fork Valley near Paonia, Colorado on the GMUG National Forests. Coal from this area meets the Clean Air Act definition for compliant and super-compliant coal, which means it has high

energy value and low sulphur, ash, and mercury content. There are two mines currently holding leases within CRAs. One is operating, producing approximately 5.2 million tons of coal annually. The second is currently idle due to a fire and flood within their mine operation. The final rule accommodates continued coal mining opportunities within the North Fork Coal Mining Area. At approximately 19,500 acres, this area is less than 0.5% of the total 4.2 million acres of CRAs. The North Fork Coal Mining Area exception allows for the construction of temporary roads for exploration and surface activities related to coal mining for existing and future coal leases. The reinstatement of this exception does not approve any future coal leases, nor does it make a decision about the leasing availability of any coal within the State. Those decisions would need to undergo separate environmental analyses, public input, and decision-making.

A Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) has been prepared to complement the 2012 Final EIS for the Colorado Roadless Rule. The SEIS is limited in scope to address the deficiencies identified by the District Court of Colorado in *High Country Conservation Advocates v. United States Forest Service* (13–01723, D. Col), correction of boundary information, and to address scoping comments. In conjunction with the 2012 Final EIS, the SEIS discloses the environmental consequences of reinstating the North Fork Coal Mining Area exception into the Colorado Roadless Rule.

The Forest Service wants to ensure that there is sufficient time for potentially affected parties, including States, to comment. Thus the Agency is providing an extended comment period for the proposed rule and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement.

Reviewers may obtain a copy of the proposed rule and SEIS from the Forest Service Colorado Roadless staff website at go.usa.gov/3JQw, or from Regulations.gov website, www.regulations.gov.

Dated: December 22, 2015.

Thomas L. Tidwell
Chief,
Forest Service

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